



**DECISION MEMO**  
**CRYSTAL FARM BILL**  
**U.S. FOREST SERVICE**  
**OUACHITA NATIONAL FOREST**  
**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, ARKANSAS**

**BACKGROUND**

The Forest Service proposes to promote resiliency to insect and disease infestations through the implementation of commercial thinning harvest on approximately 500 acres of loblolly pine, shortleaf pine, and mixed pine-oak stands in Montgomery County, Arkansas.

**DECISION**

I have decided to authorize a commercial thinning for the Crystal Farm Bill Project in Montgomery County as described herein.

This activity falls into a category of action that may be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA), which the Chief of the Forest Service has determined will not have a significant effect on the human environment:

Projects to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, insect or disease infestation in areas designated under section 602 of HFRA, utilizing the CE in section 603 of HFRA. 32.3 (3).

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- In a letter dated March 31, 2020, from the Arkansas Field Supervisor of the United States Department of Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service (USDI-FWS) to the Ouachita National Forest, Forest Supervisor, the USDI-FWS confirms that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) satisfied requirements under section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for actions in the 2005 Land Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) programmatic consultation (50 CFR 402.02) for all listed species present during analysis in the project area. The letter states that “since, the USFS satisfied its section 7 obligations pertaining the Forest Plan in 2005, it is not necessary to initiate consultation on individual projects implements under the 2005 Forest Plan unless for one or more of the following reasons: 1. The amount or extend of incidental take is exceeded; 2. New information reveals effects of the agency’s action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner, or to an extent, not previously considered; 3. The agency action is subsequently modified

in a manner that cause and effect to the listed species or critical habitat not previously considered; and/or 4. A new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the action.” Based on the rationale above, the Wildlife Biologist concludes that a letter of concurrence is not needed from the USDI-FWS for this project. (Biological Evaluation Completed 7/16/2020)

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – there are no floodplains or jurisdictional wetlands within the project area and none will be impacted by project activities. There are no municipal watersheds in the project area.
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas would not be affected.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- Research natural areas – none are present within the project area; none will be affected.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – No known Indian religious or cultural sites are within or adjacent to the project area and none will be impacted by the proposed action. The actions are considered an “Exempted Undertaking” (Programmatic Agreement, 2005, V.B. 14).
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – Project activities will be in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. No unevaluated or eligible cultural resources are located within the area of potential effect. The project will result in a *No Effect to Historic Properties*. SHPO concurrence received April 13, 2020.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

A notice of the proposed action for this project was mailed to the District NEPA mailing list on January 31, 2020, soliciting comments on the project. No responses were received.

## **FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

This decision is consistent with the Ouachita National Forest Revised Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (OBJECTION) OPPORTUNITIES**

Decisions that are categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are not subject to an administrative review process (pre-decisional objection process) (Agriculture Act of 2014, Subtitle A, Sec. 8006).

## IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The project may be implemented immediately.

## CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Chip Stokes, 1523 Highway 270 East, Mount Ida, AR 71957; by phone at (870) 867-2101.



ICHIRO B. STEWART  
Acting District Ranger

10/7/2020

Date

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